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The Wrong Hands

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Editor's Choice:

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Media type:

Book

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14-year-old Graham Sinclair lives in a dull town in Yorkshire and, as the title suggests, has something wrong with him. He was born with 'disaster areas' for hands with fingers that 'have folds in them that looked like the inside of an umbrella when it's closed up'. He has a hard time at school. The other kids shout 'Spakky' at him and, like many stories which feature 'odd' or disabled children, the only friends he has are those who are similarly friendless. But Graham and his mother share a secret - a secret he has been warned never to tell, and despite many hints, we are a third of the way through the book before we learn that his strange hands can open out like dustbin lids so that like his mother and Granda' before him, he can fly. In deep trouble because of the terror he causes a neighbouring girl when he reveals this secret ability, Graham is sent to live with his uncle in London. There, he has a number of adventures. When a plane from Uzbekistan crashes into a tower block near to his home, he uses his skills to save a dying baby. He meets a gorgeous woman and gets to drink champagne in strange clubs before he learns that she is a reporter for the national tabloid, 'The Moon'. He is wrongly accused of assault. The story ends with Graham and his mother flying off in 'Close Encounters' style (we know not where) with police, father and all the neighbours looking on in wonder. The publicists are billing this book as something that will appeal to readers of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, but the strength of Haddon's work was to create a character the reader was eager to follow in every thought he had and every journey he took, however absurd these might be. Graham Sinclair and his flying adventures will have its moments for some young readers, but it doesn't quite take us there.

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